

Ormand Family Activity

December 2011: Pinnacle Peak

Our last adventure of the great 2011 vacation trip blowout year was a day trip to Phoenix.

- When we visited the University of Arizona's Mars exhibit at the Rialto building (which is still there, and highly recommended), one of the docents told us she commutes to Phoenix for her other part-time job at the Arizona Science Center. She told us about the "Real Pirates" exhibit, and encouraged us to visit. Actually, I already knew about the pirates thing, having looked at the website, www.azscience.org, and was just looking for an excuse to go.
- When we went to Rawhide for Charity's 20th birthday, we understood that Rawhide was originally in north Scottsdale and derived from the Pinnacle Peak steakhouse. In the process of investigating this claim, Jerri discovered there actually *is* a Pinnacle Peak steakhouse in north Scottsdale (www.pppatio.com), and resolved to check it out.

So the last possible opportunity in 2011, on Thursday, December 29, we leave early-ish in the morning. My original desire was to do another overnight thing and see something else, like the Musical Instrument Museum or the shopping district around Central and Roosevelt, but we are already scraping the bottom of the money barrel (actually, scraped through the bottom of the barrel and rooting in the dirt underneath), so we will have to settle for a day trip.

Early-ish is a relative term; with my pack of females and the one-and-a-half hour trip to downtown Phoenix, we arrive just before lunchtime. Charity drives up and into the city; she assures her sister that Phoenix is ever so less stressful than Los Angeles - Faith does not derive much comfort from this. The Science Center is in the Rosson Historical Block, and there's a convenient parking garage. When we emerge into the Historical Block, Jerri remembers that Pizzeria Bianco is there and suggests we have lunch there. The girl says "forty-five minute wait", but it is much shorter than that, and soon we are enjoying home-made mozzarella on hand-tossed crusts and sipping sparkling water (well, *I* am; the girls can't get past their Manitou Springs experience with mineral water).



After lunch, we walk into the Science Center and purchase our tickets. To make a day of it, we also sign up for a planetarium show and a film at the IMAX. Tickets to the pirate exhibit include general admission to the museum (since you have to go through the museum to get to the exhibit). After strapping on our wrist-bands, we get an elevator and go right on up.

The "Real Pirates" story is about English colonist Sam Bellamy, who is courting a maiden in Maine and is aware of her parents' displeasure of him as "a penniless sailor". So he arranges with a Yankee financier for a ship, and with his new partner they sail south for the current get-rich-quick scheme: piracy. I was a bit surprised at the acceptance of this line of work by people from "Puritan" New England. Piracy was punishable by death, but Sam and his partner appear to have not even considered any legal or moral objections to this plan.

Anyways, Sam and his ship linked up with other Caribbean pirates and met with success, including the capture of the *Wydah*, a galley formerly seeing service in the slave trade, from whence her name came, an homophone of the name of the Ivory Coast town where the native king profited from the sale of his countrymen (yes, it wasn't just Europeans and Arabs; even the blacks sold their fellows into slavery). After capturing other ships and amassing a significant amount of treasure, Sam's fleet left to return home so he could assure his future in-laws of financial stability. Charity raised the question of how the lady would view her husband, a thief and a murderer and a destroyer many times over. But it was not to be; the *Wydah* went down in a violent storm off Cape Cod, and his other ships suffered that, out of his crew of more than a hundred, only eight survived, and six of those were tried and hung (and the great Puritan preacher Cotton Mather was present at the trial).



In the present, there was a man whose father had pointed out to sea and told him there was a wrecked pirate ship out there. The man kept this in mind, and when he had done the research and acquired the equipment, he discovered the wreck of the *Wydah* and much of the significant amount of treasure. But the laws and tax implications of recovering sunken treasure left him with one best avenue - forming a corporation to exhibit the stuff in museums. Like the Arizona Science Center. Like this amazing pile of silver coins!

It was a very good exhibit, explaining how real pirates lived

and worked - making the obvious point that they were very unlike the portrait in romantic literature, to say nothing of recent Disney-produced movies. We saw swords and pistols and sawed-off muskets and cannon and rigging, all recovered from the *Wydah*. We learned how to tie a bowline knot and read a cannon's weight and how pirates lived on-board. They made great emphasis on the distinction between commercial or naval sailors, who lived under tremendous pressure (underfed, underpaid, severe discipline) and the pirates, who adopted a largely democratic society, electing the officers and expecting social equality (the sumptuous pirate captain's cabin? Entirely the stuff of fiction).

It was a great exhibit, and we left through the "Real Pirates" gift shop, where of course we had to buy stuff (probably where they pick up a lot of their income). Then we saw a planetarium show about Saturn, the rings, its different moons, and the spacecraft that have explored the system. Then the IMAX movie about dolphins and how intelligent they are. Of course, both shows were heavy on the secular ancient universe and evolution propaganda. I thought it was especially telling how they presented a theory for the formation of Saturn's rings, being the collision between two asteroids near the massive planet, and the fragments fell into the current orbit and tidal forces from the planet and its moons steered them into the ring shapes we see now. However, the only evidence for this theory of the ring formation are the rings

themselves! Very circular.

After and in between the paid shows, we looked around some of the exhibits in the Science Center, particularly the human body and brain displays. Faith and Charity enjoyed the person who sneezed on you, and the pimple demonstration. Faith learned that, due to her adolescent brain, she classifies as a "risk taker" (and she *is* the SCUBA diver in the family). We saw a comparison of animal brains to the human brain, and now we have more of an appreciation of why our cats act the way they do. Of course, the message that came out of the brain exhibit is that human minds are identical with their brains, and our thoughts, values, behaviours are entirely explained by neurochemistry. That's not true in *my* book!

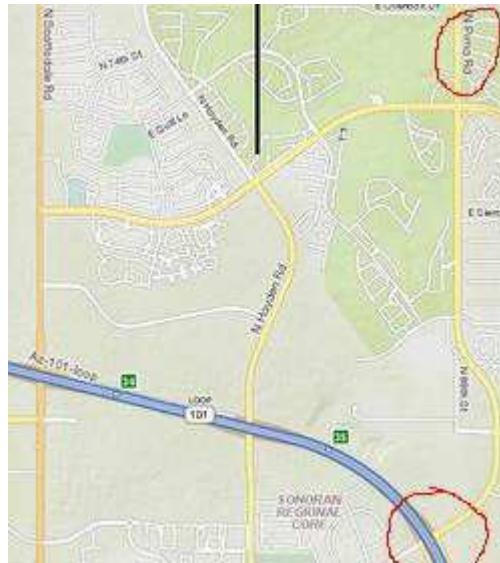
We also got to look at pictures and displays of artifacts from Phoenix's history, which were posted around the museum. This was either part of Phoenix's anniversary, or the Arizona Centennial, or the fact that the Phoenix Museum of History, next door and part of the Science Center, is closed. In any event, it seemed to me that Tucson has retained more of our history in working buildings than Phoenix has. But while Tucson is trying to turn our hobby trolley track into a real transit system, Phoenix had electric trolleys in the late nineteenth century, and of course has the working Metro light rail system now!

We spend all afternoon at the Science Center, all the way up to closing time. It was a great time, and when it was over, we went up the outside staircase to the second level of the parking garage, got in our car, and pulled out the street atlas to figure out how to get to the steakhouse. From the website, I knew the address, and had printed out a map... and left it on the printer! If only we had our little GPS navigator gadget... but I had left it on the bookcase! So we had to make do with where I remembered the restaurant was and the road atlas. We located where it was from what I remembered, and figured the best way to get there was to take the 101 Loop around and get off at Pima Road.

Oops! There are TWO exits for Pima Road! Of course, we took the first one, and bumbled around for the better part of an hour before looking at the atlas again. Where we wanted to go was on the 101 north of Bell, Shea and Cactus.



The wrong exit



The right exit

Eventually, we got to our destination - the Pinnacle Peak Patio steakhouse. It's "Patio" because they have 2000 seats outside, usable most of the year. But not the winter, like it is now, and it is a bit nippy (it was even a bit in central Phoenix), so we are taken to some of the 1800 seats inside. That's a big restaurant! (Seen here, during the day; not my photo.)



Sure enough, the rafters of the low ceiling are festooned with cut-off neckties, and the menu has the Cowboy and Cowgirl Steak with toast and "Cowboy Beans", just like the Pinnacle Peak back home. We order our meals, and while we wait, we enjoy looking around at all the display cases of odd collections (license plates, bolo ties, can and bottle openers, locks and keys, law enforcement badges and patches, and much, much more) and listening to the live musician playing country songs next to the dance floor in the next room.



Then the steaks arrive... and Jerri gets a surprise! Of course, she ordered hers well-done, so it arrived *well-done*. No pink in *that* cut! But the waitress refers to it as "filet of sole". The joke has played out, and the boot is replaced with her steak, and we find the food about the same grade as Pinnacle Peak back home.

We have enjoyed our adventure in finding this remote place in north Scottsdale, and the food and the music and the setting. Before we go, Jerri makes a few enquiries. Yes, Rawhide came from north Scottsdale, but it was not associated with Pinnacle Peak; it was just another steakhouse in the neighborhood and then it moved to where it is now near Wild Horse Pass Casino. The Pinnacle Peak restaurant *here* was established in the 1950s, starting as a general store that sold steak dinners to the travelers en route to the Salt River Project lakes northeast of the Phoenix area. The steak dinners took off, the general store aspect faded, and the owners' fortune was made. Of course, the restaurant takes its name from an actual landform - Pinnacle Peak is the craggy hill visible in the above photo. Then through some divorces and changes of ownership, another Pinnacle Peak steakhouse was spun off in Tucson; our own favorite place in Trail Dust Town (www.traildusttown.com). All in all, Charity says she prefers our own Pinnacle Peak - even though the food is equivalent, our steakhouse is a two-story affair with lots of room to look at the ties, and Trail Dust Town is an attraction in its own right, with the stunt show and the train ride

and the cavalry museum and the shops, and so forth.



Now, it would appear that the Pinnacle Peak brand has spread even beyond Arizona, since another website I discovered (www.pinnaclepeaksteakhouse.com) has steakhouses in California and even China! Same basic menu (Cowboy Steak, Cowgirl Steak) and "No Ties" policy.

We leave the restaurant and make our way back down Pima Road (the right one) to the 101 Loop, and continue on to I-17. I had in mind to stop at Glendale and see the lit-up streets, but Faith leaves on a church youth retreat the next morning, and it will already be almost midnight before we get home as it is. So "Glendale Glitters" will have to wait til next year!